

Summit & Stream



Support Your
State Parks
Auction

Saturday, April 23 at 6:00pm

See back page for info...

Official “Goodwill Officers” —Our Park Volunteers

By Annie Castele Bill

My family and I enjoy many of the varied aspects of our State Parks year-round from camping, kayaking, and fishing in the summer months, to snow machining and skiing in the winter months. In the past 20 years of enjoying Alaska, most of our outings involved adventures in our State Parks from Prince William Sound, to Hatcher Pass, and on north up to Denali State Park.

Over the years, the flavor and experiences we have had in the Parks

has changed as we have moved through different recreational interests and stages, but the Parks themselves— their beauty, serenity, wildlife—have stayed the same. What has changed over the years is the quality of visitor service provided by our park managers and staff. I attribute this both to hard working, dedicated, rangers and maintenance crews working alongside the unsung heroes of our parks, our Volunteers.

“Where would we be without them? They are worth their weight in gold!”

*~Dennis Heikes, Superintendent,
Mat-Su State Parks*

John Wilber, Park Ranger in the Nancy Lake Area & Denali State Park, says our Park Volunteers are “indispensable”. This past year, in Mat-Su parks alone, volunteers logged 40,000 hours according to Mat-Su Superintendent Dennis Heikes. He says our volunteers “make all the difference.”

This past summer volunteers at the Denali State Park Visitor Center greeted 50,000 people from around the world. Our Campground Hosts & Caretakers kept our campgrounds, cabins, and visitor centers clean while being the eyes and ears of the Rangers. Other volunteers from local Rotary Clubs raised funds and built a \$10,000 addition at Independence Mine State Historical Park. Our local Friends
continued on back page...

Headlamps and Hard Rocks

By Annie Castele Bill

What does absolute darkness, running water, headlamps & raincoats, and an unforgettable experience all have in common? They are all aspects of fabulous mine tours of the historic gold mines at Independence Mine State Historical Park. On a sunny Saturday last August over 40 brave souls donned their hard hats, rain gear, and water boots. They then grabbed their flashlights and followed the footsteps of Park Rangers and experienced tour guides while exploring the history of Granite Mountain and the Independence and Gold Cord Mines. The day's activities were designed by Friends of State Parks Mat-Su and brought in \$4,000, which will be used for historic interpretation at Independence Mine.



Inspecting some rock near the entrance to the central tunnel, what an adventure.

Tour groups led by Chief Ranger Pat Murphy and former New Independence miner Scott Eubanks entered Granite Mountain at the 2000' level via the water tunnel and hiked more than 1.5 miles along the spiral "roundabout" tunnel gaining an elevation of 500'. While balancing along on old narrow-gauge, ore-train tracks they traced the history of gold exploration and mining in the Willow Mining District of the Talkeetna Mountains. They followed tunnels supported by huge beams and accentuated by abandoned equipment to the actual gold bearing veins deep inside the mountain.

Outside, other history seekers accompanied park staff to the Gold Cord Mine and were greeted by owner/miner Dan Renshaw and had a firsthand observation of the working ball mill. They learned the incredible history of this working mill and were given insight into the challenges and benefits of gold mining in Alaska. Still other visitors participated in the aboveground tours led by the Alaska Natural History Association of the historic buildings at Independence Mine—the Bunkhouse, Mess Hall, Apartment Building, Assay Office, and Warehouse.

All the mine tour participants learned about gold extraction in the granite-like quartz diorite by the muckers, drillers, blasters, trammers, nippers, shop workers, and other laborers, along with the foremen and engineers that kept the mines operating over the past almost 100 years. Everyone who participated in these tours came back with a personal insight into Alaska's geology and mineralogy. They captured a snapshot of a bygone era and had a glimpse of the many challenges and difficulties encountered by these mining men.

One participant was long-time Alaskan Bob Hammaker, of Palmer. He said he "always wanted to see what was in those mines" and he enjoyed getting a "feel for what mining life was like." He was so enthusiastic about the tour he's looking forward to doing it again next summer.

Ranger Pat Murphy and park administrators have plans to give him that opportunity by continuing the tours through the assistance of Friends of Alaska State Parks. He said the park staff "is really encouraged by the enthusiastic response of the public and (they) hope and look forward to the day when the tours can be offered several times per day."



**Friends of State Parks,
Mat-Su**

*Enhancing our parks and
recreational resources*

Summit & Stream is the newsletter for Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su, a non-profit organization dedicated to the enhancement of recreational resources in state parks in the Mat-Su Valley.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Toby Riddell, President
Bill Wheeler, Vice-President
Tom Burek, Treasurer
Linnea Crosby, Secretary

COVER PHOTOS

- 1) Mt. McKinley looms in the distance, as two hikers crest Kesugi Ridge.
- 2) A camper enjoys a sunset paddle on Byers Lake.
- 3) Hikers stop to enjoy the view near Little Coal Creek.
- 4) Two women admire an eagle through the spotting scope provided at Denali State Park.

"We Make a Difference – Your Donations at Work"

Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su continues to improve our recreational state park resources. The following projects would not have been possible without the hard work of our board, membership, and park supporters.

Public Use Cabin

A new public use cabin will soon be available for visitors to Denali State Park. A site has been cleared and is ready for a foundation. Park volunteers and staff will construct the cabin beginning this spring and it should be ready for occupancy by the end of summer.



A public use cabin in Glennallen, similar to the one planned for Denali State Park.

Grooming Ski Trails

Friends of State Parks has been providing funds obtained from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's bed tax grants for grooming ski trails in the Independence Mine/Hatcher Pass area for the 2004/2005 season. The trails around the historic mine buildings and bowl offer excellent skate and classical style skiing.

Mining Display at Independence Mine

A new mining display was built from Friends of State Parks funds so that park visitors will be able to experience first hand the hard grueling work that miners went through in their search for gold.

Grooming Motorized Trails

Grant funding was obtained to groom motorized trails in the Hatcher Pass Management Area. The trails are in excellent condition and provide easy access for the many snowmachiners who enjoy the Pass.

Landscaping at IMSHP fee station

FOSP provided funds for landscaping to spruce up the area around the fee booth at Independence Mine State historical Park.

Window Repair of Historic Buildings

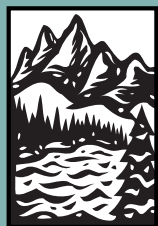
Funds were provided for the on-going restoration and preservation of the historic mining buildings at Independence Mine.

New Snow Groomer for Denali State Park

A new trail groomer is being purchased to groom multi-use trails around Byers Lake and to access the Public Use Cabins.



Visitors at Independence Mine State Historical Park are introduced to many facets of a miners life and hardsh.



Friends of
State Parks,
Mat-Su

Enhancing our parks and
recreational resources

Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su is a non-profit organization dedicated to the enhancement and protection of recreational resources in state parks in the Mat-Su Valley. Our board works closely with our local state park staff and the Mat-Su Valley State Parks Citizens Advisory Board. Please join us in our efforts to improve our recreational opportunities. Thank you.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____ Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Area(s) of interest (check all that apply)

☐ Fundraising ☐ Event Planning ☐ Park Administration

Type of Membership:

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$10.00 annual	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$25.00 annual
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$15.00 annual	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime	\$100.00
		<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Lifetime	\$500.00

Would you be interested in volunteering for organization projects? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Thank you for supporting our local State Parks!

3rd Annual Friends of State Parks Auction



Iditarod Champion, Martin Buser, our auction host for 2005.

Time to plan for your summer recreation outings by participating in the 3rd Annual "Support Your State Parks" Auction to be held at 6:00 on Saturday, April 23, at the Palmer Railroad Depot. Join our host, Martin Buser, and fellow park enthusiasts for the opportunity to bid on recreational gear, guided tours and miscellaneous goods and services in the silent and outcry auction. Win a door prize for one nights accommodations for two at the Denali Princess Lodge or the Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge including round trip transportation from Fairbanks or Anchorage aboard the Midnight Sun Express. Door prizes, wine tasting, food, and live entertainment make this an event you won't want to miss.

Tickets may be purchased for \$10.00 per person in advance or at the door by calling 892-6916 or 745-3975. Get your tickets early, seating is limited.

Hope to see you there!

Official "Goodwill Officers"—Our Park Volunteers

continued from front page...

group and Park Advisory Board members assist Park Managers and offer myriad kinds of support. Local Boy Scouts have fun with trail brushing while earning Scouting badges. Some volunteers have even saved the lives of park visitors as first responders in emergencies. These are just a few of the highlights of the accomplishments of these official "Goodwill Officers"—our wonderful park volunteers.

What kind of person is a park volunteer? They came from all walks of

life (college students, youth & teen groups, families, and retirees). Volunteers include folks from Alaska and all over the lower 48. What they have in common is an eagerness to help make a difference in our parks. Volunteers can offer intermittent work or can sign on for a full season. They can work behind the scenes or, if they prefer, have a job that's up close and personal greeting visitors. Volunteers get to meet all kinds of people and work in the most beautiful settings of our State while making a valuable contribution to

our community. As Superintendent Heikes says, good volunteers "are worth their weight in gold!"

If you are interested in volunteering, talk to your local Ranger, Superintendent, or Visitor Center Staff Member, or call the Mat-Su State Park office at 907-745-3975. You may also contact our statewide Volunteer Coordinator at 907-269-8708, for details and a complete list of volunteer opportunities statewide. We'd love to add your name as an official "Goodwill Officer" for Alaska State Parks.

For more information:

Department of Natural Resources: www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks
Friends of State Parks, Mat-Su: 907-745-8931



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